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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9865  
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY ATHENS  
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DIA WASHINGTON DC  
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
SECDEF WASHDC  
CDRUSARPAC FT SHAFTER HI//APCW/APOP//  
CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J3/J332/J52//

UNCLAS COLOMBO 000459

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SCA (BOUCHER), SCA/INS AND PRM  
STATE ALSO PASS USAID  
AID/W FOR ANE/SCA, DCHA/FFP (DWORKEN, KSHEIN)  
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA (MORRISP, ACONVERY, RTHAYER, RKERR)  
ATHENS FOR PCARTER  
BANGKOK FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA (WBERGER)  
KATHMANDU FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA AND POL (SBERRY)  
GENEVA FOR RMA (NKYLOH, NHILGERT, MPITOTTI)  
USUN NEW YORK FOR ECOSOC (D MERCADO)  
SECDEF FOR OSD - POLICY  
PACOM ALSO FOR J-5

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Northern Sri Lanka SitRep 60

REF: A) Colombo 456 B) Colombo 454 C) Colombo 448 D) Colombo 435  
E) Colombo 432 F) Colombo 425 G) Colombo 418 H) Colombo 414 I)  
Colombo 413 J) Colombo 412 K) Colombo 411 L) Colombo 402 and  
previous

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Charge called the Foreign Minister to support the UN Secretary General's request to allow a working-level UN team access into the "no-fire zone" (NFZ) to negotiate an LTTE surrender.

The Minister was non-committal. The Sri Lankan military pressed on in its pursuit of remaining LTTE fighters in the NFZ, stating it expected to complete the operation within several days or maximum 1-2 weeks. Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon and National Security Advisor M. K. Narayanan arrived in Colombo to discuss the situation with the GSL, after a strong statement from Indian Foreign Minister Mukherjee calling for an immediate halt to all hostilities.

The ICRC continued its sea evacuations of wounded civilians and family members from NFZ on April 24. The ICRC plans the next medevac for April 27. The WFP food shipment has still not gone in because of concerns about security. An unofficial UN document estimating about 6,500 killed and 14,000 wounded in the NFZ from January 20 - April 20 was leaked to the Associated Press. The UN told us the population of IDP camps would soon reach 225,000 IDPs, far outstripping capacity. End summary.

FM BOGOLLAGAMA/CHARGE

12. (SBU) Charge called Foreign Minister Bogollagama April 24 to convey strong Co-Chair interest in working with the GSL to obtain an LTTE surrender through laying down arms to a third party (UN or ICRC), amnesty for cadres, and custody with international monitoring of the remaining LTTE leadership. Bogollagama was non-committal, saying that the GSL is looking at these options. Charge reiterated

support for a UN mission into the safe zone to talk to the LTTE leadership about surrender, as discussed during the recent visit of UNSYG Chief of Staff Nambiar. Bogollagama said the government was considering this possibility and the logistics that would be required, such as the team going in and out on an ICRC-flagged ship, but again was non-committal. He said the GSL wanted to see what the visit of Indian National Security Adviser Narayanan and Foreign Secretary Menon, in Colombo April 24, produced.

13. (SBU) Charge noted U.S. commitment to continuing to offer humanitarian aid and our willingness to consider providing medical assistance for IDPs coming out of the safe zone. He reminded Bogollagama of the Embassy's April 2 letter requesting that the GSL put its requirements for medical assistance in writing and confirm that the request had the support of President Rajapaksa. Bogollagama said that whereas the GSL was initially interested in an addition to the hospital at Padawiya, the current priority, given tremendous short-term demands, was a field hospital. Charge suggested that mobile medical teams might be another way to meet current needs rapidly. Bogollagama undertook to provide a written request for U.S. medical assistance promptly.

#### INDIA SENDS HIGH LEVEL PAIR TO COLOMBO

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14. (SBU) Following the release of a strong statement from Foreign

Minister Pranab Mukherjee, the Indian Government sent Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon and National Security Advisor M. K. Narayanan to Colombo on April 24 for talks with GSL, presumably including the President. The statement by the Indian Foreign Minister, released on April 23, was as follows:

15. (SBU) "The Government of India has been monitoring with deep concern and anxiety the evolving situation in Sri Lanka, in particular the conditions of the Tamil civilians in the conflict zones. We understand that over 100,000 civilians have emerged from the No Fire Zone into areas under Government control in the past three days but the lives of several thousands of innocent civilians remain threatened. We are very unhappy at the continued killing in Sri Lanka. All killing must stop. There must be an immediate cessation of all hostilities."

16. (SBU) The Canadian High Commission told us that Foreign Minister Cannon had called Foreign Minister Bogollagama on April 23 to express concern about the humanitarian situation. The EU delegation reported that EU External Relations Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner's conversation with Bogollagama following the Co-Chairs conference call had been tough.

#### ICRC CONTINUES MEDICAL EVAC BY SEA

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17. (SBU) ICRC's medical evacuation ferry, the Green Ocean, was back at the loading point in the NFZ the morning of April 24. 530 wounded and family members were evacuated by this ferry on April 23, and the April 24 trip was expected to evacuate approximately 500 more, with the next trip planned for April 27. The logistics and security arrangements for these three most recent medical evacuations had proven most difficult, the ICRC reported, and it had recommended against sending in the WFP food supply ship, which is much larger and therefore harder to secure. As a result, the food shipment continues to wait at Trincomalee. As of April 23, the Government Agent of Mullaitivu was still in the NFZ assisting with the logistics of the evacuations and prior food shipments. (The April 23 SitRep reported he was allegedly trying to leave the NFZ.) The last shipment of medicines into the NFZ was on April 8, leaving a critical shortage.

#### MILITARY EXPECTS END SOON

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18. (SBU) Sri Lankan military sources told Defense Attache they expected to complete operations within a few days, or at most a week or two. They estimated 10,000 to 15,000 civilians were still held by the LTTE in the NFZ. (Note: UN estimates are much higher.) The sources said they did not foresee a significant US military role in humanitarian assistance.

¶9. (SBU) Contacts in the military said they estimated that 300-400 hardcore LTTE and Sea Tigers remained inside the NFZ, including LTTE police and political operatives, and that an additional 700 recent forced recruits also remained. The LTTE controlled about 10 square kilometers. SLA forces were moving south from Putumattalan, and they estimated about 20,000 civilians remaining in the NFZ. (Comment: The Sri Lankan military has consistently tended to underestimate remaining LTTE forces.)

#### STATUS OF POSSIBLE UN TEAM GOING TO NFZ

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¶10. (SBU) UN Resident Coordinator Buhne reported to Charge the results of his meeting with Foreign Minister Bogollagama on April 23. Buhne pressed the written request for a UN security assessment team to enter the NFZ to prepare for a possible working-level mission to negotiate an LTTE surrender. Bogollagama replied "they could go in tomorrow." Buhne pointed out there would need to be a brief hiatus in the firing for that to take place; Bogollagama said he could not comment on that.

¶11. (SBU) Buhne told Charge that, contrary to press reports, there was no UN team en route to the NFZ; If an initial working-level mission goes in, the team would consist of Colombo-based UN security officers. However, he noted no indications that the GSL was preparing to accommodate even the security assessment mission at this time.

#### AP CITES PRIVATE UN CASUALTY REPORT

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¶12. (SBU) AP broke a story citing the private UN casualty estimates reported in April 23 SitRep (from January 20 to April 20, 6,432 killed in the fighting, mostly civilians, and another 13,946 wounded.) Embassy considers these the most reliable figures available, but believes it important that USG sources not confirm them since they are UN numbers.

#### EVACUATED IDP SITUATION NEAR OVERWHELMING

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¶13. (SBU) UNHCR reported they expected a total caseload in camps of 225,000 IDPs. As of the morning of April 24, there were approximately 115,000 IDPs housed in camps, with an additional 108,000 recent escapees from the NFZ en route and expected to reach camps soon. This would not include tens of thousands of civilians still remaining inside the NFZ.

¶14. (SBU) Various sources reported GSL was struggling to keep up with the influx, both in initial processing and in providing shelter, food, water, clothing and medical care. USAID Mission Country Director and OFDA Representative visiting the primary site at Manik Farm on April 24 reported many busloads of new arrivals there. Tents had been erected for shelter, but very few food supplies were available, with no specific provisions for children or infants. Clothing was also scarce and water supplies were not yet sufficient.

MOORE